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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with President Putin of Russia (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President  
President Putin

Note takers: Leslie Radcliff, Colin Crosby,  
Nikki Williams, and Ed Padinske

Interpreter: Peter Afanasenko

DATE, TIME: December 6, 2002, 7:37 - 7:54 a.m. EST  
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: Vladimir, good morning, or good evening. (U)

President Putin: George, very glad to hear you. (U)

The President: Thanks. In our meeting in St. Petersburg, which I thought went very well, we said that we would talk about your visit to China and I'm curious to know what you think in regards to North Korea. (S)

President Putin: This is exactly why I am calling you. Indeed I assure you that we did a very good job in St. Petersburg when we last met; that was a very good meeting. I do understand that you were a little tired after all you did in Europe and NATO. I thank you for coming to St. Petersburg. I would like to brief you on China. As we agreed, I discussed North Korea in detail with the Chinese leaders, particularly the issue of weapons of mass destruction. I spoke with all the Chinese leaders, Jiang Zhemín, Hu Jintao and the head of their parliament. Basically, all of them confirmed their position in favor of nonproliferation and the nuclear weapons-free status of the Korean peninsula. And on the whole China and Hu Jintao are against the development and production of WMD on the Korean peninsula. And they are in favor of creating a nuclear weapons free-zone. And on the whole, I'm under the impression that we and the Chinese share the same approach to this problem. I made a proposal to them and the proposal is that we should think about the next proposal that the North Koreans make. And that is why we should try to ensure that they agree to put all their nuclear programs under the IAEA safeguards regime in exchange for a clear-cut guarantee of their

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security from the U.S., China and Russia. This is something that I would like to ask you to give instructions to Powell to think about. I think this is not a bad idea. We will continue to work with Pyongyang along two lines. First and foremost is to clarify the status of their nuclear programs; we still have no clear-cut evidence of nuclear WMD. Secondly, we try to encourage them to have contacts with all countries, including the United States. And the Chinese and I share the view that it would be counterproductive to paint North Korea into a corner, especially given the peculiarities of North Korea and its leadership. (S)

The President: Can you repeat that last part? (U)

President Putin: Both the Chinese and we believe it would be counterproductive to paint North Korea into a corner, taking into account the peculiarities of their leadership. It is difficult to predict how they think. (S)

The President: Good. (U)

President Putin: I also discussed Iraq with them. By and large, there is nothing new with the Chinese and you are aware of their position. On the whole, there is something I would like to share with you, something that I observed. It is something personally for you. The new leaders of China. First of all they are not exactly new. I got a good impression of Hu Jintao. The impression is that he keeps in the shadows; nevertheless, in recent years he has been playing a leading role in formulating Chinese foreign and domestic policy. In other words, he is profoundly privy to the nuances in all domestic and international policies. In other words, he is no novice. He is a professional and at the same time, this is a guy with mettle. There is only one question. He should feel right away that he is number one. Taking into account his character and his nature, it will happen fairly soon. Now, one other issue quickly. On my trip, I also visited India and Kyrgyzstan. We discussed the problems of India-Pakistan relations. We will continue to persuade them to continue the policy line to pull back forces from their borders. We signed a bilateral statement with them on international terrorism. We also discussed peaceful uses of nuclear power and I have a request to make. I would like to suggest that you instruct your Energy Secretary to talk to our Energy Minister about the Indian energy problem. I would like to ask you to so that we can step it up. And in Kyrgyzstan, we had a number of very good meetings. On the whole, the central Asian countries are combating terrorists. I will have some meetings with them here in Moscow and we will continue to encourage their willingness to work jointly. In Kyrgyzstan, we will soon deploy a small aviation wing to support our ground operations against terrorists. This is all that I have to tell you. (S)

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( The President: Thank you, Vladimir, very much. I appreciate your good work on North Korea. I think that the fact that you speak clearly of a nuclear-free peninsula with the Chinese without cornering Kim Jong-Il sends a good message. I'm confident that if we keep up the dialogue with North Korea we will avoid conflict and meet our goals peacefully. I also appreciate your briefing on India and I will talk to my Energy Secretary. So I thank you for the call. If I don't speak to you before Christmas, I wish you a Merry Christmas. Tell your family all the best. (S)

President Putin: Thank you. I want to also congratulate you and wish you a Merry Christmas. You looked great in that cowboy hat. We saw you. We saw that you were snowed under and we were worried. Please give your family our best regards. May God keep you well and in good health. (U)

The President: Thank you. (U)

President Putin: All the best. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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